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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/12/2027  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [KU](#) [NATIONAL ASSEMBLY](#)  
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT FORCES OIL MINISTER TO TESTIFY ON  
CORRUPTION CHARGES

REF: A. KUWAIT 882  
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 836

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Three opposition MPs formally submitted on June 10 a request to "grill" Kuwait's Oil Minister, Shaykh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. The grilling will require Shaykh Ali Al-Jarrah to go before parliament on June 25 to answer questions related to accusations of financial and administrative impropriety as well as controversial remarks he made in a May 12 newspaper interview. After the grilling, a minimum of ten parliamentarians is needed to submit a request to hold a no-confidence vote, which will be voted on after a seven-day waiting period.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Government sees grillings as a challenge to its authority, especially when the minister to be grilled hails from the ruling Al-Sabah family. Al-Jarrah is a distant cousin of the Amir, outside the main branch of the ruling family. In December, the Information Minister resigned rather than face grilling and the March grilling of the Health Minister (a ruling family member) led to the resignation of the entire cabinet. Since the beginning of parliamentary life in Kuwait, 37 grilling requests have been submitted, but the parliament has never removed a minister via a no-confidence vote. If the Amir sees that a no-confidence is likely to pass, some observers predict he will dissolve the parliament. Speculation is rampant as to whether the Amir, if he does dissolve parliament, would call new elections within two months, as stipulated by the constitution, or whether he would suspend the parliament for a longer period of time. A parliamentary crisis can still be avoided if the minister resigns, though the Government has stood by him firmly thus far and might consider his resignation a victory for the opposition.

[1](#)3. (C) A senior official in the Islamic Constitutional Movement told PolOffs June 10 that the current state of crisis points to a failure of leadership. The loose parliamentary blocs have succeeded in harassing the Government with a nearly constant barrage of grilling threats since parliament's current session began in October 2006, but they have had much more difficulty maintaining cohesion around issues. The ICM official noted that if the Government were to articulate a strong agenda of serious issues important to Kuwait's national interest, it would force MPs to spend their time on issues rather than on endless grillings. However, given the increasing assertiveness of opposition MPs and the Government's failure to lead on key issues, the current state of impasse may characterize Kuwaiti politics for some time to come.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The current "crisis," as the media here calls it, does not threaten Kuwait's stability. Even the most extreme scenario, unconstitutional dissolution, would

not affect Kuwait's foreign policy. End Comment.

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LeBaron